I. Amendments to the Claims

This listing of claims replaces without prejudice all prior versions and listings of claims in the application.

Listing of the Claims:

1. (Previously Presented) A process for preparing a composite material, the process comprising mixing at least one natural fiber, at least one polypropylene resin, and a coupling agent to provide said composite material; wherein said coupling agent consists essentially of a base polypropylene homopolymer that is grafted with a total of more than about 1 mmole of at least one polar monomer per 100 grams of functionalized polypropylene homopolymer coupling agent, and wherein said functionalized polypropylene homopolymer coupling agent possesses a molecular weight distribution of greater than 2.5 (M_w/M_n by GPC).

2. (Original) The process of claim 1 wherein the natural fiber is selected from the group consisting of wood flour, wood fiber, and agricultural fiber.

3. (Original) The process of claim 1 wherein the natural fiber is selected from the group consisting of wood flour, wood fiber, hemp, flax, and kenaf.

4. (Original) The process of claim 1 wherein the natural fiber is employed at a level in the range of from about 20 to about 85 weight % based on the total formulation weight of the composite material.

5. (Previously Presented) The process of claim 1 wherein the base polypropylene homopolymer is grafted with a total of more than about 5 mmole of at least one polar monomer per 100 grams of functionalized polypropylene homopolymer coupling agent.

6. (Previously Presented) The process of claim 1 wherein the base polypropylene homopolymer is grafted with a total of more than about 10 mmole of at least one polar monomer per 100 grams of functionalized polypropylene homopolymer coupling agent.

7. (Original) The process of claim 1 wherein the polypropylene resin is a polypropylene copolymer comprising a major proportion of propylene combined with a minor proportion of a second monomer selected from the group consisting of ethylene and C_4-C_{16} monomer materials.

8. (Canceled).

9. (Original) The process of claim 1 wherein the polypropylene resin is polypropylene homopolymer.

10. (Canceled).

11. (Original) The process of claim 1 wherein the polar monomer is selected from the group consisting of ethylenically unsaturated carboxylic acids, ethylenically unsaturated carboxylic acid anhydrides, and derivatives of the foregoing.

12. (Original) The process of claim 11 wherein the polar monomer is selected from the group consisting of maleic acid, fumaric acid, itaconic acid, crotonic acid, acrylic acid, methacrylic acid, maleic anhydride, itaconic anhydride, substituted maleic anhydrides, and derivatives of the foregoing.

13. (Original) The process of claim 1 wherein the polar monomer is maleic anhydride.

14. (Previously Presented) A composite material prepared by a process comprising mixing at least one natural fiber, at least one polypropylene resin, and a coupling agent to provide said composite material; wherein said coupling agent consists essentially of a base polypropylene homopolymer that is grafted with a total of more than about 1 mmole of at least one polar monomer per 100 grams of functionalized polypropylene homopolymer coupling agent, and wherein said functionalized polypropylene homopolymer coupling agent possesses a molecular weight distribution of greater than 2.5 (M_w/M_n by GPC).

15. (Currently Amended) A composite material comprising at least one natural fiber, at least one polypropylene resin, and a coupling agent ~~to provide said composite material~~; wherein said

coupling agent consists essentially of a base polypropylene homopolymer that is grafted with a total of more than about 1 mmole of at least one polar monomer per 100 grams of functionalized polypropylene homopolymer coupling agent, and wherein said functionalized polypropylene homopolymer coupling agent possesses a molecular weight distribution of greater than 2.5 (M_w/M_n by GPC).